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Period 2

The Notorious B.I.G.

Gang violence, drugs, sex. Three words to describe how the nineties went for rapper/songwriter/vocalist/record producer, Biggie Smalls, aka, The Notorious B.I.G. I chose The Notorious B.I.G. because his music and life style interests me. My prior knowledge on Biggie Smalls is knowing that he was a gangsta rapper. I knew his one song, Big Poppa, from a movie called “Hard Ball”. I know that B.I.G. had a quarrel with opposing rapper Tupac Shakur, who is also one of my favorite rappers. I chose this topic because I’m interested in learning more about the rapper Notorious B.I.G.

Christopher George Latore Wallace, other well known as “Biggie Smalls” or even “The Notorious B.I.G.” was born may 21, 1972. He was raised in the Brooklyn borough of New York City, Wallace grew up during the peak years of the 1980’s crack epidemic and started dealing crack and other drugs at a surprisingly early age. He was an only child to Voletta Wallace, a Jamaican pre-school teacher, and George Latore, a welder and small time Jamaican politician.

The father to Wallace left when he was only two years of age. His mother had to work two jobs to support Christopher. He excelled in school and was nicknamed “Big” before he was ten years old because of his size. Christopher began selling drugs at age 12. His mother was unaware of the drug-selling because she was often at work.

At age 17, Wallace dropped out of high school and became further involved in crime. In 1989, Wallace was arrested on weapons charge and sentenced to five years probation. Then in 1990 he was arrested on a violation of his probation. A year later, Wallace was arrested in North Carolina for dealing crack cocaine. He spent nine months behind bars until he made bail.

On August 4th, 1994, Wallace married singer Faith Evans nine days after they met at a Bad Boy photo shoot. Four days later, Wallace had his first pop chart success as a solo artist with double A-side, “Juicy/Unbelievable”, which reached #27 as the lead single to his debut album.

*Ready to Die* was released on September 13, 1994, and reached #13 on the *Billboard* 200 chart, eventually being certified four times Platinum. The album, released at a time when West Coast hip-hop was prominent in the U.S. charts, according to *Rolling* *Stone* almost single-handedly shifted the focus back to East Coast rap. It gained strong reviews on release and has received much praise in retrospect. In addition to “Juicy”, the record produced two hit singles; the Platinum-selling “Big Poppa”, which reached #1 on the U.S. rap chart, and “One More Chance” featuring Faith Evans, a loosely related remix of an album track and its best selling single.

In August 1995, Wallace’s protégé group, Junior M.A.F.I.A. (“Junior Masters At Finding Intelligent Attitudes”), consisting of his friends from childhood released their debut album entitled *Conspiracy*. The group produced such rappers as Lil’ Kim and Lil’ Cease, who have went on to have solo careers.

Wallace became involved in a quarrel between the East and West Coast hip hop scenes with Tupac Shakur, his former associate. Shakur accused Uptown Records’ founder Andre Harrell, Sean “Puffy” Combs, and Wallace of having prior knowledge of a robbery that resulted in him being shot repeatedly and losing thousands of dollars worth of jewelry on the night of November 30, 1994. Though Wallace and his entourage were in the same Manhattan-based recording studio at the time of the occurrence, they denied the accusation.

In June 1996, Shakur released “Hit ‘Em Up”; a diss song in which he explicitly claimed to have had sex with Wallace’s wife (at the time estranged), and that Wallace copied his style and image. Wallace acknowledged the former, referring to it in regards to his wife’s pregnancy on Jay-Z’s “Brooklyn’s Finest”, but did not directly respond to the record, stating in a 1997 radio interview it is “not his style” to respond. Shakur was then shot six times in a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas, Nevada, on September 7, 1996. He would die six days later of complications from gunshot wounds. Rumor’s of Biggie’s involvement were reported almost immediately.

On October 29, 1996, Faith Evans gave birth to Wallace’s first son. Christopher “CJ” Wallace, Jr. Lil’ Kim and Wallace were involved in an apparent love affair. She was also pregnant by Wallace but decided to have an abortion.

On March 9, 1997, at around 12:30 a.m., Wallace left with his crew in two GMC Suburban’s to return to his hotel after the Fire Department closed the party early due to overcrowding. Wallace traveled in the front passenger seat alongside his associates, Damion "D-Roc" Butler, Junior M.A.F.I.A. member Lil' Cease and driver, Gregory "G-Money" Young. Combs traveled in the other vehicle with three bodyguards. The two trucks were trailed by a Chevrolet Blazer carrying Bad Boy's director of security.

By 12:45 a.m. the streets were crowded with people leaving the event. Wallace's truck stopped at a red light 50 yards from the museum. A black Chevy Impala pulled up alongside Wallace's truck. The driver of the Impala, an African American male dressed in a blue suit and bow tie, rolled down his window, drew a 9 mm blue-steel pistol and fired at the GMC Suburban; four bullets hit Wallace in the chest. Wallace was rushed to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center by his entourage but was pronounced dead at 1:15 a.m.

Wallace’s murder remains unsolved and there are a plethora of theories as to the identities and motives of the murderers. The LA Times reported that the Southside Compton Crips may have killed Wallace in retaliation for Bad Boy not paying them money owed for security services provided in the West Coast. In the same month, MTV News published that witnesses had told the Associated Press they were afraid to speak to law enforcement.

In conclusion, Biggie Smalls was a rapping phenomenon. His life was short lived but he accomplished many things in his lifetime. He became incredibly famous in the nineties, which is why I have chosen to do my decade on the nineties. He started out rough in life, his father left at an early age and he began dealing drugs at age 12. Despite all the negatives in his life he became one of the greatest rappers of all time.